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TRUST, IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE: IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES.

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Abstract

Doctoral research was undertaken in 2012 to explore how academics construct and manage their sense of identity in the context of a dominant managerial discourse. The qualitative case study explored perceptions and experiences associated with the construction and reconstruction of academic identity within Australian universities. Eight academics each took part in two, hour-long, in-depth interviews held on separate occasions. Appreciative Inquiry techniques enabled academics to express strongly held views and values regarding academic work in the current tertiary environment.

The study revealed that many aspects of the prevailing managerial climate have negative effects on the potential for ideas and strategies to be aired in ways that permitted what mattered to academics to be expressed. Respect, trust and open communication were seen as central to discourse leading to innovation but these were seen by participants as being at risk in a climate that even unintentionally is focused on performance and compliance to the needs of the system. An absence of or sense of reduced trust between academics and management was a noteworthy theme and research finding.

The findings showed that the use of a process such as Appreciative Inquiry could be a catalyst to bring about positive change or innovation, to build important social capital and to develop strategies around more diverse academic roles.

The study in brief

The aim of the research was to learn more about the social as distinct from economic aspects of academic life by focusing on academic identity. The study was founded on a position that views organisations as dynamic entities that are shaped by individuals through their actions and interactions who in turn are also shaped by the structures, systems, processes and contexts of the organisation. As such, the research is situated within an interpretivist philosophical framework. (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002; Sandberg & Targama, 2007).

A key objective of the research was to gain insights from practising academics into how they perceive their roles, and in particular what gives them a sense of identity as an academic with a focus on the meanings and values they see as most rewarding. The research topic was entitled 'An exploratory study of the ongoing formation of academic identity in an Australian tertiary context.' The overall research question was, 'how do academics construct and re-construct their identity within their current educational context?' Eight academics from Humanities, Education and Social Sciences disciplines across several Australian universities took part in the study and participated in several in- depth interviews.

University life in the twenty first century.

Universities, like other organisations, are dynamic not static entities. They evolve and change over time, in response to significant external factors as well as planned and unanticipated internal changes. (Johnstone, d'Ambrosio & Yakoboski, 2010). They fulfil important and significant economic, cultural and social objectives through their work in research, education and community engagement activities. Scott (2006) reminds us that the university has been meeting the needs of the nation-state since the 1500's, and engaged in public service since the nineteenth century, as democratisation occurred. Grumblings about "submission to business power or the industrial status quo" (Scott, 2006, p. 24) can be seen from the early twentieth century, and discontent amongst academics relating to the bureaucratization of the university structure also emerges in this period.

Tension between academic freedom and autonomy on the one hand and control on the other whether from the university's own management and administration or from industry, government and business has been a feature of the university system for a long time. It does appear however that the twenty first century university faces unprecedented levels and speed of changes leading to many writers stating, like Scott (2006) that "the Western university is no longer a social institution but an industry, subservient to blind market forces" (p. 28) and this concern has given rise to others who call for a reassertion of the public service role and purpose of a university. (Gumport, 2000; Bok, 2003; Denham, 2005; Nixon, 2010; Barnett, 2011). Engell & Dangerfield (2005) argue that the pursuit by universities of money to fund more of their needs has become an end in itself rather than the means to an end. This has in turn led to other serious consequences including the "objectification of the student" (ibid, p. 76,) a loss of idealism, decisions taken for financial not pedagogical reasons, and disinvestment in the humanities.

Since the 1980s in particular, forces such as economic rationalism, neoliberalism, globalisation, government policies that led to massification of the system and technological innovations have all had their impacts on universities in the industrialised world. (Bostock, 1999; Couturier, 2005). Massification is associated with government requirements to accept larger numbers of students, to educate and train graduates for the economy, and to do so with increased degrees of flexibility. (Mora, 2001, p. 100; Englund, 2002, p. 282; Denham, 2005, p. 13). Universities respond to such changes by making policy and structural adjustments that may be seen in, for example, the rise of entrepreneurial universities, (Clark, 2001; De Zilwa, 2005; Etzkowitz, 2004), the increased attention given to research commercialisation, (Australian Research Council, 2000; Jain, George & Maltarich, 2009) an increase in managerialism (Fredman & Doughney, 2012) and diversification into mixed modes of teaching and learning made possible by advances in educational technologies. (Duke, 2002, p. 121).

The Australian university context.

Australian universities have not escaped the pressures and forces of change previously highlighted. A substantial body of literature highlights the crucial role the Australian university plays in meeting the needs of the economy. Concomitant with this shift in emphasis is a sense that the university has become more closely tied to the objectives of the government of the day, and that universities have become an instrument of government as reflected for example, in policies concerning the commercialization of research. (Allen Consulting Group, 2004; Australian Research Council, 1999, 2000, 2001; Department of Education, Science & Training, 2002a). These policies put the focus strongly on the outcomes of research that in turn tend to promote or reinforce a perception of universities as entities that produce products resulting in the commodification of knowledge and commercialization of the research process. The period often described as the Dawkins era saw the end of one kind of diversity with the demise of institutes of technology and colleges of advanced education and the creation instead of more universities. This process occurred in 1990 and resulted in what some would depict as neoliberalism playing out in the Australian higher education sector. (Fredman & Doughney, 2012, p. 42; Laming, cited in Zajda & Daun, 2009, p. 135; Marginson, 1997, p. 67).

Whilst the take up in the economy of the outcomes of university research via commercialisation is in itself neither good or bad, problems can occur if policies regarding university commercialisation cause an unjustifiable de-valuing of knowledge perceived as less commercial. This utilitarian value is reinforced through measurements that don't factor in that knowledge in the Humanities is more difficult to measure. (Cassity & Ang, 2006). These effects have been experienced in the Arts and Humanities and given humanities research and education is "concerned with critical understandings of cultural and symbolic objects and processes", this has diminished the rightful place of critical thinking in society. (Bullen, Robb & Kenway, 2004, p. 15). There is an irony too, in the push for knowable outcomes occurring at a time when there is also a sense that we need to educate individuals for an unknowable future, and that creativity, ideas generation and diversity of outcomes is therefore increasingly important.

It is generally accepted that universities have, and need to have, a diversity of values and purposes and, as noted in an Australian Government Commissioned Report on university research commercialisation, researchers who are interested in pursuing commercialisation activities associated with their research should be supported. (Australian Research Council, 1999). So too though, should those academics who are fulfilling and enacting other different yet equally important objectives, such as scholarly work of intrinsic value. If commercialisation reduces an academic's freedom to determine and pursue their own research interests, this has negative consequences not only for the intrinsic motivation and commitment of the individual academic but also for the trust relationship between the academic and the community in general which is served through academics being able to work within a freedom of enquiry framework, rather than in response to prevailing government policy and dominant corporate ideology. (Kayrooz, Kinnear & Preston, 2001).

The dominance of economic over other values and the associated negative effects on job satisfaction and academic morale is also clearly in evidence in the Australian literature. (Adams, 1998; Department of Education, Science & Training, 2002b; Anderson, 2008; Bellamy, Morley & Watty, 2003; Hall-Taylor, 2001; Lacey & Moens, 1990; Wood, 1992; Winter & Sarros, 2001, 2002; Winter, 2009, Biggs & Davis, 2002; Taylor, Gough, Bundrock & Winter, 1998; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Department of Education, Training & Youth Affairs, 1999; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Marginson, 2002). Australian universities appear to have been forced to operate too much as a private good as distinct from a public benefit philosophical position. This national policy position has had a damaging effect on cultural life in universities and eroded levels of trust. (Vidovich & Currie, 2011). Managerialism has had negative effects on leadership and has led to inadequate attention being paid to the value of self-concept. (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000).

Inadequate attention has been paid to the need for academics themselves to more assertively and more continuously communicate successfully why values and activities that are not about meeting the needs of the marketplace, matter. (Coady, 2000). That the quest to do so has so far not been successful was recorded by Kinnear (2001) and is suggested in the research into academic workloads and job satisfaction undertaken by Houston, Meyer and Paewai (2006). More recently, Hil (2012) aptly cited "public disinterest" in the present situation universities face. (p. 14). This writer recounts not only public apathy but also a negative impact on the arts, the response by humanities to become the creative industries, a decline in collegiality, a pressure to mark up students when according to him he would fail over one third of his students were he being honest; and a culture of disaffection and complaint. (Hil, 2012, p. 24). It is reasonable to suggest, based on this literature, that any perceived failure by academics themselves, to engage more confidently and assertively in discourse about the non–commercial properties of knowledge, is likely to be due to a combination of factors including fear, apathy, insecurity, risk aversion, a lack of political consciousness and an inclination to avoid possible recrimination from university management.

Research undertaken by Coates et al. (2010) and Gordon & Whitchurch (2010) suggests that Australian universities need to take on the challenge of transforming or re-conceptualising the academic workforce as a response to local, national and international conditions that impact on the sector. Coates et al. (2010) calls for a reconceptualization of the academic workforce as a response to its increasing complexity and diversity. Significantly too, they refer to a need "for the system to find and implement a positive narrative for the future." (p. 2).

Academic identity

The concept of academic identity may be summed up as referring to the sense of self that an individual possesses when they identify with and see themselves as part of the academic profession. Henkel (2005) noted two key features of academic identity, namely "the discipline and academic freedom". (p. 166). She also observed that these features "were in many cases the sources of meaning and self-esteem, as well as being what was most valued. [It] is often difficult to disentangle these three dimensions of identity". (p. 166).

The concept of academic identity is frequently associated with values and behaviours such as intellectual freedom, autonomy, collegiality and the independent pursuit of truth, of working to create and disseminate knowledge in a more or less disinterested manner in the sense of not undertaking it with the expectation of a commercial return; being "intellectual, critical and knowledgeable and committed to scholarship." (Archer, 2008, p. 397). Research, teaching and service to the wider community are key academic activities that contribute to academic identity. (Archer, 2008, p. 397).

Academic identity is a changing, socially constructed process. (Boyd & Harris, 2010, p. 11; Billot, 2010, p. 711; Archer, 2008; Henkel, 2005, cited in Enders & de Weert, 2009; Jawitz, 2009, p. 242 and Clegg, 2008). Identity may also be seen in the context of the "interplay of the agency of the individual with the structures and boundaries that they encounter." (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2010, p. 129). Whitchurch et al. (2010) comment that the future may be characterised by increased control as well as increased fluidity (p.139).

"Stable understandings about academic and/or professional identities and career paths are likely to be increasingly difficult to sustain" (Whitchurch et al., 2010, p. 140). This ought to be read as a call for leadership that focuses on organisational culture and for the ability and the capacity to lead numerous diverse and even conflicting cultures operating within the one structural or systemic framework. Meeting this challenge would also require that more "attention [be paid] to factors that motivate" those academics and professionals who choose to support and to work inside universities. (Whitchurch et al., 2010, p.141).

Academic identity carries significance both symbolically as well as instrumentally. (Henkel, 2000). Of concern however is the assertion that "the loss of academic identity is cited as a self-evident consequence of a higher education managerial environment driven by market competition and the pressure to generate income." (Gordon et al., 2010, p. 147). Academics may believe that the publicly stated mission of the university may be incongruent with the values that they perceive actually drive the institution. This can lead to strong feelings of inauthenticity, a situation that may be at odds with any objectives relating to organisational sustainability that the university may possess. (Archer, 2008). Even if the stated values are ones that are in accord with those typically seen as academic values, if the values discrepancy is significant in scale or in nature this may well result in a weak or even toxic academic culture. (Billot, 2010; Pololi, Kern, Carr, Conrad & Knight, 2009; Archer, 2008).

The challenges associated with understanding the nature of academic identity formation and ongoing re-formation, together with a need to "operate within more open and contested arenas… [and] to rely less on assumed rights and more on management of a greater variety of relationships within and beyond the academic world" are ones that academics and academic leaders need to meet. (Henkel, 2005, p. 170). Henkel (2005) asserts that the much valued quality of academic autonomy remains strong but its meaning has changed. Given the significance attached by university academics to terms such as freedom and autonomy, it is

important that the process of examining and discussing the changing meanings of these and other important concepts be part of an ongoing academic identity meaning making process. Whilst much of the research depicted here refers to the negative impacts on academic identity there is also, as Henkel notes, (as cited in Enders & de Weert, 2009), "perhaps more scope for agency than is sometimes assumed." (p. 92). It may be that the ongoing process of identity construction and re-construction needs to be seen as critical not only to academics themselves in their personal quest to work in meaningful ways, but also as part of a collaborative exercise undertaken between academics and leadership. Perhaps academics need to become more politically and organisationally savvy in order to skilfully reflect upon and negotiate identity and agency as part of their normal work and this suggests that doing so, needs a university culture supportive of such processes. Quigley's (2011) discussion paper on academic identity concludes with a range of questions that suggest this type of thinking may be fruitful. This also implies that academics and their leaders need to have effective negotiation skills. (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 227).

Academics can derive a sense of identity and potentially a source of satisfaction and commitment from their actual teaching and research discipline, their profession and their institution. They may also derive a sense of identity from their discipline to a much greater degree than from their institution especially if there is perceived to be a significant disconnect between the dominant values and objectives of the organization and those of the academic discipline-based group. (Archer, 2008; Gordon et al., 2010, pp. 148-9; Pololi et al., 2009, p. 1291; Billot, 2010, p. 713; Fredman et al., 2012, p. 55; Davies & Peterson, 2005). This would seem to have repercussions for institutional leadership, if there is a need to try to harness academic support for change.

Maintaining a sense of identity enables academics to perceive their work as meaningful; it also contributes to productivity as any significant misalignment between academic values and those of the institution, threatens not only productivity but also the capacity of the institution to attract and retain skilled researchers and teachers. (Pololi et al., 2009). Declining academic freedom and autonomy, deprofessionalisation, increased influences of managerialism and more administration tasks, the added work loads associated with teaching on line often in addition to face to face, the felt need to pay one's way by securing grants, the need to teach increased numbers of students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds who need additional academic support, all these factors have their effects on academic identity. (Altbach, 2001; Anderson, 2008; Archer, 2008; Department of Education, Training & Youth Affairs, 1999a; Billot, 2010; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2011).

Understanding and recognising the relevance of identity is important for anyone in an organisational setting, especially those in leadership roles, as identity and identification are linked to important organisational objectives and outcomes including employee commitment and responsiveness to change.

> "As societies and organisations become more turbulent and individual-organisation relationships become more tenuous, individuals' desire for some kind of work-based identification is likely to

> increase-precisely because traditional moorings are increasingly unreliable".

(Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008, p. 326).

Academics at the then named Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Victoria, Australia conducted a survey of over 3,000 academics working inside business disciplines in Australian universities. The results of their research mirrored findings elsewhere (UK; US) in that those valued features of being an academic, being intrinsically motivated and working in a climate of autonomy, with flexibility, intellectual challenges, the opportunity to pass knowledge onto and interact with students, were seen as being under threat and were the cause of declining job satisfaction. (Bellamy et al., 2003). In another Australian study the researcher summed up some of her interview findings as resisting vocationalism. Academics framed their opposition to the dominant managerial discourse with reference to the "valued component of their self-identity". (Anderson, 2008, p. 267). Her finding that academics were not well equipped to "argue publicly against the 'imperialising discourse' of managerialism" is particularly interesting. (p. 262).

The dominant managerial discourse may have the effect of intruding upon a professional's sense of identity and skewing the purpose of what the professional does, away from their sense of what is appropriate, towards what the institution requires. This skewing may well lead to academic disengagement, reduced organizational commitment and declining job satisfaction. Anderson (2008) noted that academics "framed their opposition and resistance to managerialism with reference to particular elements of this [i.e. "traditional academic culture"] valued component of their self-identity." (p. 267). Marginson (2000, 2011) argues both philosophically as well as practically, that there is a need for universities to attain stronger positions as public service institutions.

Other research undertaken into academic work satisfaction in Victoria revealed the prevalence of themes and issues seen in studies undertaken overseas. Words like "game playing", "managerialist and profit-seeking nature of contemporary universities" (Fredman et al., 2012, p. 45, 53) all serve to illustrate how academics might find that their sense of identity, of undertaking meaningful work that is not about nor motivated by profit seeking, and not motivated by intrusive management would be undermined by these prevailing conditions. This study does however contain the seeds of ideas that could give cause for optimism and that also might be taken note of by anyone in a leadership position inside a university. The seed is that "respondents tend to conflate all recent managerial change with marketization". (Fredman et al., 2012, p. 41). The authors also question whether professional management practices need to be and seen to be, associated with undesirable commercial, marketised, neo-liberal policies. Academics currently do tend to equate managerial with undesirable control and with market-oriented values that run counter to their notions of what it means to be a university and to be an academic. This tendency ought to come under more active scrutiny as well as constructive action, in order to arrive at more progressive notions of being professional in how one runs a faculty or school or department, without those professional management attributes being linked to one kind of organizational purpose, such as the quest for financial resources. (Fredman et al., 2012). The

challenge for leadership here is to assert and sustain a range of academic values, purposes and activities where the administrative infrastructure is efficient but not of a nature that interferes with or undermines core academic values and roles. That universities might improve their willingness and abilities to articulate and manage diverse yet often complementary, as distinct from necessarily conflicting, agendas and purposes, is also suggested by Sharrock (2010).

Academics who research and write about academic identity invariably present differing degrees of discontent and concern regarding the impact of the dominant discourse on academics' sense of identity. For some Australian writers such as Davies et al. (2005) and Davies and Bansel (2005), the critiques are quite strongly negative. Acts like leaving the sector to pursue a more independent career as seen with Davies (2005) and Meyers (2012) contrast perhaps with those who criticize the present situation but they do so in a way that recognizes and suggests the potential for academics to adopt a more assertive stance, to be more politically engaged and to use discourse and actions to transform the system and see a re-balancing of values to mitigate the effects of commercialism and marketization. Those who express this more optimistic view include Henkel (2005) and Clegg (2008).

Does it matter that a university academic environment is one in which individuals are able to work in ways that matter to their sense of identity? If there is agreement that those elements that cause a loss of a sense of identity also cause indirectly, a loss in productivity then that would seem to be a compelling reason for leadership to be interested in understanding how academics come to have and retain a sense of identity. (Gordon et al., 2010, p. 156). Citing threats or risks to productivity is made here, in recognition of the context in which this discussion about academic identity takes place. Institutional and individual academic identities don't arise in a cultural or values vacuum. As Pusey (2010) notes, the Australian culture is characterised by a preference for the practical, the pragmatic, and even the bureaucratic. (p. 81). Any argument for academic identity and agency, therefore, should take into account the preference for pragmatism, and relative acceptance of economic rationalism, neoliberalism and a utilitarian approach to education. (Pusey, 2010; Laming, cited in Zajda et al., 2009, p. 137). Linking or associating agency and identity (i.e. their worth) with improved motivation, commitment and productivity rather than the importance to individual self esteem of retaining a sense of integrity within one's identity construct/s may yield more traction. While it may be more desirable from a humanistic perspective to argue for a stronger focus on what matters to academics, for reasons to do with their sense of purpose and meaning in the context of the academic role, it is in acknowledgement of the pragmatic culture that more positive impacts may be felt by appealing to sustainability, flexibility and effectiveness arguments for the university.

The challenge for an academic leader who wants to fulfil the leadership tasks of influencing, strategically seeing and planning, building an innovative and creative academic climate and culture, is to be able to work at the level of values and views held by and embodied in the people in their unit. This is a more indirect form of influence and is about leading or leadership "based more on dialogue rather than authority" and entails

gaining and also influencing "people's understanding of their own and their [organisation's] task." (Sandberg et al., 2007, p.1). Importantly too, acknowledging different strategies, values and purposes, requires an appropriate language to support understanding and to reduce tension between those who work as academics and those who manage them (Sharrock, 2010). Effective and cohesive academic units are likely to possess those features because leadership was effective at maintaining a "shared understanding" amongst staff. (Sandberg et al., 2007, p. 2). In an academic context, this is often a challenge.

The 'best' about being an academic

The themes that emerged from my research painted a picture of what was perceived as most meaningful and satisfying and that in effect, also revealed how and why the participants constructed and re-constructed their identity as academics. They felt strongly that education had the power to transform and that relationships amongst staff, and between staff and students, were central to that view. They felt that academics had a strong desire for service to the community and to society, through activities that range from the pragmatically oriented education of professionals, to research projects whose objectives relate to some of today's complex problems. There was a strong future orientation and importance was given to the roles of engaging in and teaching critical thinking. These characteristics serve to explain why all participants were strongly intrinsically motivated, and it is the intrinsic nature of motivation that may give them a rationale for having an academic identity that is constructed and re-constructed in the face of challenges to that position.

The majority of participants could also be said to have a sense of vocation, described by Sennett (2008) as a "sustaining narrative." (p. 263). There was a strong sense with many of the participants that they were doing what they were "meant to do" (p. 263) and in doing so, they believed that what they were doing was worthwhile. Sennett (2008) says that this "drive to do good work turns out to be no simple drive." (p. 266). He links this quality to notions of a "well-crafted institution [that] wants to respond to this desire, once it decides that loyalty matters." (p. 266).

The study revealed many reasons why repaying loyalty would seem to reap dividends to the institution and its numerous stakeholders. The values-driven identity work and sense of vocation help to build a strong social organisation. The participants in the study showed clear intentions to work in a humanistic way and with a clear sense of purpose. Gibson (1998) wrote about our need to address issues like complexity and control by revisiting the fundamental question of why an organisation exists. The human need for meaning and purpose, often felt and derived from one's work, can be a powerful drive that can energise and sustain an organisation. The challenge of providing contexts and environments in which individuals do matter, to echo Barnett again (2011, p. 55) where they can work in a 'spirited' organisation, even though the organisation possesses characteristics of bureaucracy and large networks, is one for leaders at all levels of the organisation. One theme that stood out from this study was the inherently worthwhile educational objectives that motivated the academics and, as Nixon (2010) said, these kinds of often less tangible goods, are those that build or constitute "human capability, human reason and human purpose." (p. 115).

Undertaking an exploratory study into academic identity revealed that the participating academics construct and retain their sense of identity through remaining committed to values that they perceive are essential to being an academic. This identity construction process could be conceptualised as an important resource for a university, and roles, systems and processes designed in "synergistic alignment" (Cooperider & Whitney, 2005, p. 8) with them. In order for this to occur, however, the cultural context would need to support this perspective. In a changed cultural environment, the identity formation and reformation process could be the foundation for a more transformation capable and hence more sustainable organisation. In this study, the participants referred to the relentless pressure and language of performativity, the lack of trust and the focus on compliance as features that eroded their sense of identity and commitment. They were, however, strongly motivated and committed to the best aspects of their academic work.

A significant finding of this study was the realisation that academic identity formation and reformation is a very important sense-making process that should be the foundation of an ongoing process of organisational transformation. Sense-making was shown to be a crucial component of successful transformational change undertaken at a number of higher education institutions that were the subject of a study undertaken by Kezar and Eckel (2002).

The academics who took part in this study on academic identity all felt that they had to hold on to those values that intrinsically motivated them against organisational cultural norms that often pressure a person to act against those deeply held values. This does not build commitment. It leads to compliance and it arguably entails a considerable expenditure of emotional and psychological energy that in a more humanistic environment could be fruitfully spent on relationship building, and on the teaching, research and community engagement activities the university needs to see occurring.

The study supported the view expressed in Barnett & Di Napoli (2008) that "It just may be that we are seeing a narrowing and a widening of academic voice and identity all at once." They also posit that "An identity is less easily taken away than voice." (p. 199). This was certainly the case with those who took part in the study. However, the possession by an individual of a strong determination to be heard was also an indication that, if one chooses to be heard, even if in doing so it poses a level of risk by being labelled difficult by management, then voice may be heard. As one academic said in the second stage of the research process, 'I will have my voice heard.' "Voices help to express identity". (Barnett et al., 2008, p. 114). Observing the way the academic endeavours to find ways to accommodate both personal as well as institutional objectives, lends support to a view that leadership that supports sense-making may be helpful in this regard.

Academic leadership – the significance of trust and discourse

Given the constraints of this paper it is only possible to cover selected aspects of my research findings. Two aspects of leader behaviour were revealed as being of significance for the impact they have on academic identity and on the potential for exploring ideas around greater academic role diversity. These aspects were

trust and discourse.

Lack of trust was a very strong theme and indications of a lack of trust and a view that it was more problematic to work in a trustful way, pervaded the interviews. The lack of trust theme came through when academics spoke about the relationships between academics and management, and also to a lesser extent between colleagues, caused by the pressure to compete. There was also a strong feeling of disrespect levelled at academics.

One objective of my research was that it might add to our understanding of the extent to which leader effectiveness in achieving change and innovation would be enhanced within a culture that is more supportive of open and frank discussion regarding diverse conceptualisations of academic identity. There was sufficient commentary from the study's participants to suggest that the constraints on "open and frank discussion" had a limiting effect on the potential to even consider let alone discuss, alternate ways of working. A key finding from the interviews was that leaders had to step up and speak for the social and educational values of the university, to assert their own sense of identity and to recover more of a democratic way of operating, as expressed by several participants. Most participants expressed a desire for leaders, ranging from head of school, to faculty or division leaders, to senior leaders of the institution as a whole, to use more positive language.

There was a sense in which what matters to these academics may not be spoken of unless the context for doing so is perceived to be safe. It was interesting to note what was missing from the responses. There was no mention of any opportunities for academics to hold difficult or challenging conversations as part of a constructive change process. There was however a recognition of the potential for such conversations to shift thinking and to constitute social capital. It seems that whilst academics are working hard and presumably producing outcomes that are valued, in terms of the teaching and research they undertake, they are not trusted to engage in the kinds of discussions that might strengthen levels of commitment and reduce levels of frustration that are arguably counter-productive at an individual as well as institutional level.

Performativity was frequently cited as a challenge that had to be faced. The main consequences of performativity include a noticeable decline in the value of and time given for critical thinking and reflexivity, and a need to undertake research in response to pressures to meet an imposed formula and quantity, that contrasts with the preferred rationale of meeting more academically driven and organically developed research ideas and proposals. The feeling was also frequently expressed that even if one was working hard and meeting stated and expected objectives relating to publications, research activity, teaching and administration, it was 'never enough'.

Concluding comments

The conclusion reached with regards to this aspect of my research is that there is merit in exploring this further. There is much that is positive and innovative about individual aspirations and commitment, embedded within academic identities, that offers potential for academic leaders to work with, given an improved capacity for diverse identities to be given voice and agency in a culture where there is trust.

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